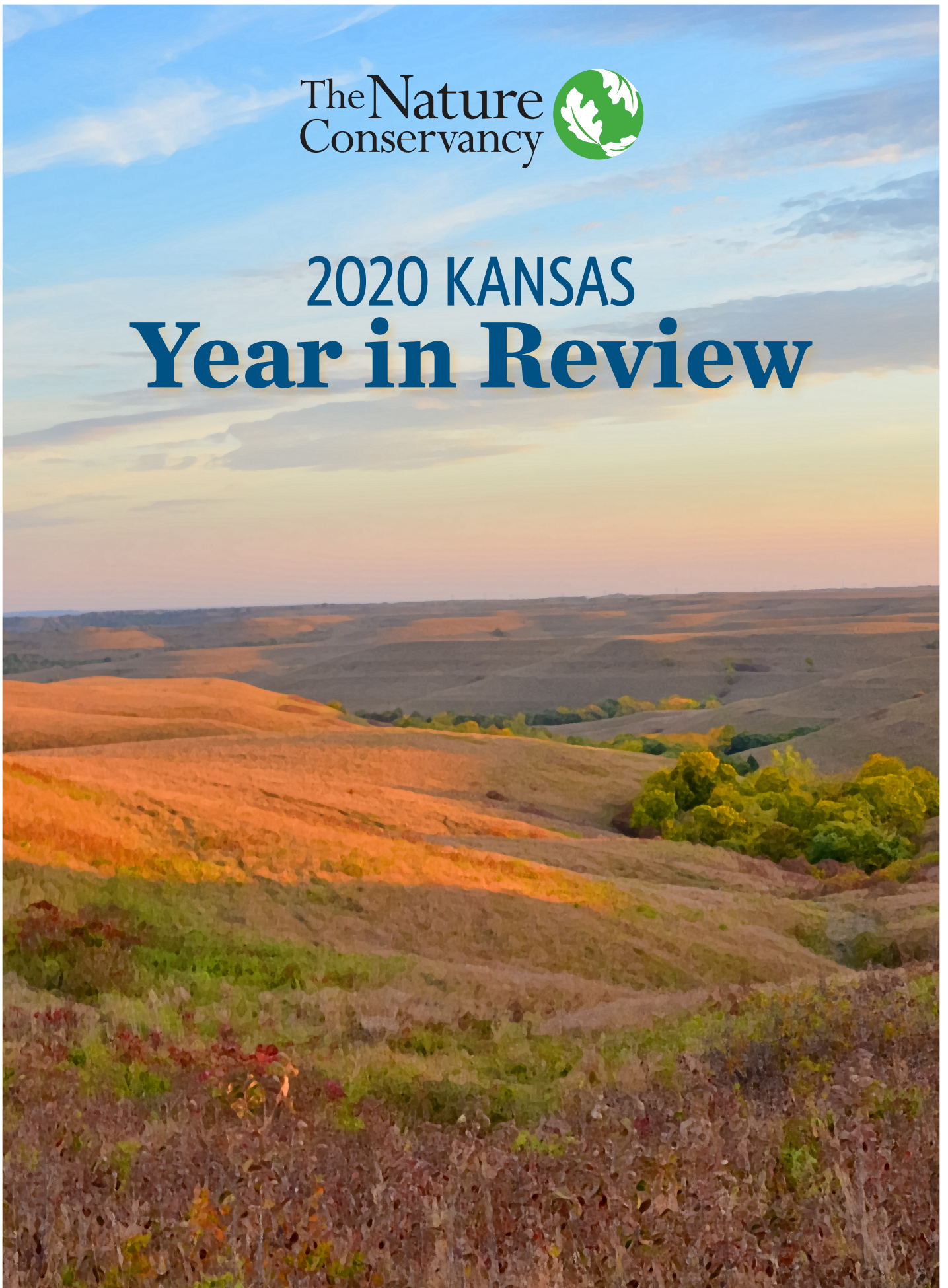


The Nature  
Conservancy



# 2020 KANSAS Year in Review






# Directors Letter

It seems that 2020 has been the year for new beginnings, overhauling how, when and where each of us lives, works and plays. So, it's fitting that 2020 is also the year *after* The Nature Conservancy celebrated a 30-year anniversary in Kansas. This wasn't a year to rest on laurels. Instead, The Nature Conservancy was as aggressive as ever, working to make our vision of a world where people and nature thrive a reality in the Sunflower State.

Both of us grew up in Kansas and have lived here for the majority of our lives. Many things have changed over the years but what remains unchanged is the reality that the lives of Kansans are tightly tied to nature. Conserving land, water and air quality also impacts livelihoods and families. The threats to nature's well-being grow more complex with each passing year. Climate change isn't a distant threat, it's happening now.


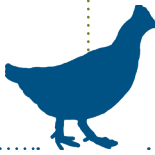






This year-in-review shares a few of the milestones and conservation successes achieved in 2020, despite the challenges of a pandemic. All of it is possible only with the passionate people who support our work. It is our hope that you find something in the pages of this report that inspires you to share it with a friend—and that you continue to share your support with us.

  
Rob Manes  
Director

  
Brad Bradley  
Chair, Board of Trustees



# Conservation By The Numbers

<p><b>142,793</b> acres permanently protected</p> 	<p><b>6,532</b> members in Kansas</p> 	<p><b>750%</b> increase in lesser prairie-chickens at Smoky Valley Ranch, 2015 to 2020</p>
<p><b>10,000</b> acres of prescribed fire in the Red Hills conducted by local prescribed burning associations</p> 	<p><b>602</b> stream miles protected</p>	<p><b>30,000</b> people visited Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park in first year open</p> 
<p><b>500</b> veterans trained at SAVE Farm</p> 	<p><b>17</b> states now have Site Wind Right mapping, a project that originated in Kansas &amp; Oklahoma</p>	<p><b>800,000</b> people get their drinking water from the Kansas River</p> 
<p><b>2</b> radio receivers installed at Cheyenne Bottoms to track migrating animals</p> 	<p><b>327</b> acres of tallgrass prairie protected with a new conservation easement this year</p>	<p><b>351</b> bison with unique Wind Cave lineage safeguarded in Kansas</p> 

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# RESTORING FLOW TO THE KANSAS RIVER

The Kansas River, known locally as the Kaw River, provides. We drink its water, harness its power, dredge its sands, float its currents and harvest its water for our fields. But for decades, we've also controlled its flow.

After the devastating Great Flood of 1951, the Kansas River was transformed with a network of levees, dams and reservoirs to prevent future natural disasters. The management plan at that time focused only on the human needs for the river and not the health of the river itself. The plan has also never been updated.

Now, almost seventy years later, the way reservoirs are managed and water is released from dams along the Kansas River is being revisited. The Kaw was added to the Sustainable Rivers Project, a nation-wide partnership between The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

“We first had to determine how species in the Kansas River rely on the natural flows of the river, and then how those flows have been disrupted by dams,” says Heidi Mehl, director of water and agriculture programs for The Nature Conservancy. “We reviewed all of the scientific literature from before the dams were built to understand how conditions in the river would vary. We could then show how the river would have flowed after a wet year or a drought, when it would be dry and how these changing conditions affected the health of the river ecosystem.”

That variability is a key to restoring a more natural flow to the Kansas River, and it impacts every aspect of river health from fish and insect life cycles to sedimentation and water quality. This year, the project team—which includes representatives from state and federal agencies along with other non-profit organizations—reviewed what changes to dam and reservoir operations could be made while still meeting all the demands of the communities that rely on the river. The team's formal recommendations to establish “environmental flows” must now go through many layers of review. Some of the recommendations are simple: a mid-summer pulse of water to help specific fish species. Others are more complicated and will take the cooperation of a diverse group of stakeholders to implement.

“This process won't happen overnight,” explains Mehl. “We have to reconcile a perfect world scenario with the realities of what we all need the river to provide for us. But what we can do is find a scientifically defensible plan to improve the river without harming commercial interests.”





# If you build it, they will come.

Three years ago, The Nature Conservancy began implementing a new management plan to increase shorebird habitat at Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve, adjacent to the state-owned Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area north of Great Bend. And each year since, an increased number of shorebirds has been documented at the preserve, with 2020 marking the best year in more than a decade.

“Shorebirds prefer to feed and rest in places where the vegetation is about half the height of the bird,” explains avian conservation manager Robert Penner. “Since shorebirds come in many sizes, we try to create a wide variety of conditions, from shortgrass prairie to wide open mudflats.”

Grazing cattle are frequently rotated through different pastures to keep plant height down. Mechanical techniques, like mowing select areas at designated times of the year, are also used to provide the different habitats. But it’s not just for shorebirds—of the 482 bird species known to Kansas, 356 have been observed at Cheyenne Bottoms. A single wetland type cannot provide all the resources required by all plants and animals. Ensuring a diversity of vegetation types and structure is the best opportunity to meet the complex conservation needs of this world-class destination.



Cheyenne Bottoms © Beau Rapalye



**FIRE Rx** Fire, whether lightning-caused or human-made, has maintained the prairies of the Great Plains for thousands of years. It is a key driver in the health and sustainability of grasslands home to native plants and animals that require periodic fire in order to survive.

But ever since European settlement, people have suppressed fire across most of North America’s grasslands, allowing woody plants and trees to grow thick while the prairies degrade. This is particularly evident in the Red Hills, also called the Gypsum Hills, of Barber, Comanche and Clark counties where eastern red cedar trees have taken over much of the mixed-grass prairie.

The solution? Carefully planned and controlled burning, called prescribed fire, that mimics natural fires. These fires are strategically designed by a team of fire experts and only occur under the safest conditions. Careful consideration is given to many factors, including the weather and wind, to ensure that the fire practitioners and nearby communities are safe and protected.

The Nature Conservancy supports the development of rancher-led prescribed burn associations in the Red Hills, providing training and donating equipment like water tanks, protective gear and radios. This year, the Gyp Hills Prescribed Burn Association, the Cherokee Strip Prescribed Burn Association and—the newest—Little Mule Creek Prescribed Burn Association performed a total of seventeen prescribed fires covering more than 10,000 acres.

**PRESERVES GO SOLAR** This year, solar panels were installed on building roofs at The Nature Conservancy’s Smoky Valley Ranch and Cheyenne Bottoms preserves. It is estimated these panels will generate 38,000 kilowatt hours of electricity each year from the sun—that’s enough to power three average American homes\*!



The impacts of climate change include more extreme weather and natural disasters, chronic droughts and economic instability. Increasing the use of renewable energy is just one piece of the climate puzzle, but it’s an important one for Kansas, which is one of the sunniest states in the United States despite all the old jokes about the weather here. Throughout the country, states could generate more than a third of their electricity sales from rooftop solar, which doesn’t generate carbon pollution and can be sited on already-converted spaces.



© Justin Roemer/TNC

\*Source: Environmental Protection Agency Green Power Equivalency Calculator



# A Family Legacy

My parents, Roger and Jeanne Blessing, enjoyed the natural areas of Kansas, including many that were conserved by The Nature Conservancy. Jeanne grew up in Great Bend, where Roger enjoyed hunting at Cheyenne Bottoms—a world-class wetland and bird migration area protected by both The Nature Conservancy and state of Kansas. They both volunteered at Symphony in the Flint Hills events, including the first one held at The Nature Conservancy’s Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve in Chase County. Travel included watching prairie chickens dancing on a Konza Prairie lek and bison grazing at the Smoky Valley Ranch, both Nature Conservancy preserves. Enjoying nature and a desire to see it conserved was a family affair. They taught me to agree that natural Kansas is beautiful and interesting, not flat and boring.

It was natural that one of their legacies was a gift to support The Nature Conservancy’s work in Kansas after their passing. While such contributions can be specified through wills or trusts, they can also be made by designating The Nature Conservancy as a beneficiary of life insurance or retirement plans. Special arrangements for gifts that provide income or donations of stocks or other property can be made with the knowledgeable staff at The Nature Conservancy.

I hope you will join my family and consider making your legacy gift soon, so you can also help to protect the natural areas of Kansas for generations to come.

**Bill Blessing**  
Board of Trustees



*Anne & Bill, Roger & Jeanne and Craig Blessing at Symphony in the Flint Hills, 2007*



**REQUEST INFORMATION**  
to find the planned gift that’s right for you. Contact John Cougher at [jcougher@tnc.org](mailto:jcougher@tnc.org) or 785-233-4400.

## Smoky Valley Ranch Made Whole Again

For the first time in 150 years, Smoky Valley Ranch is on its way to being entirely grassland. When The Nature Conservancy purchased the western Kansas shortgrass prairie property in 1999, several parcels had been carved out of the ranch, sold to other buyers and converted to cropland. The plan was always to eventually acquire those inholdings and make the ranch whole again. The final 528-acre piece was purchased in the spring of 2020.

“Prairie is a process as much as it is a place you can point to,” says Matt Bain, western Kansas conservation manager for The Nature Conservancy. “It is a process that includes fire and grazing. Now that the ranch is completely unfragmented, we can better manage those processes.”

It won’t happen overnight, though.

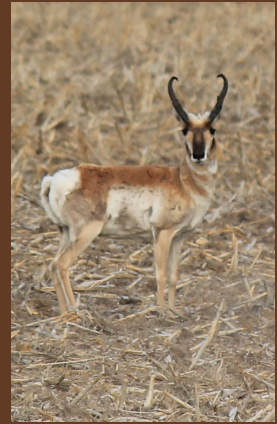
“Reconstruction is a better word for it than restoration,” explains Bain. “Many of the native seeds we need to return this land to prairie aren’t commercially available, so we’ve had to hand-collect some seeds. And it will take a few years of cover crops and waiting out the long-term effects of residual herbicide before we can even begin planting in some places.”

Still, it’s a vision long-awaited for the ranch, where the goal is to conserve what’s left of this prairie—both for the native wildlife that depend on it and also for the ranchers who depend on it for their livelihood.

The now 18,000-acre Smoky Valley Ranch welcomes visitors to the 1-mile and 5.5-mile hiking loops on the western boundary.

►► [NATURE.ORG/SMOKYVALLEYRANCH](https://www.nature.org/smokyvalleyranch)

Photos top to bottom: Lesser prairie-chicken © Justin Roemer/TNC, Yellow evening primrose © Jim Richardson, Yucca and Pronghorn © Lance Hedges/TNC





# 2020 Collegiate Interns & Fellows

**CLAIRE BURCH\*** recently successfully defended her master’s thesis at the University of Oklahoma. She is a National Science Foundation research trainee who chose to work in the Flint Hills for her fellowship this year. Prior to her summer field work at Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, she developed a model to design the unique seed mixes required for prairie restoration. Claire says the on-site fellowship allowed her “to explore a new avenue for human dimensions of natural resource management,” and she plans to continue her research while pursuing a doctoral degree.

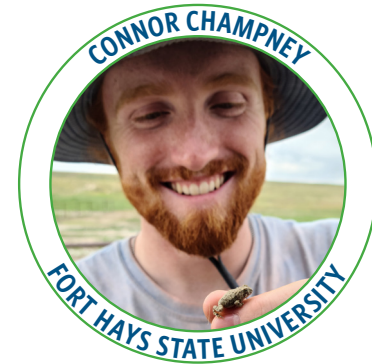
**CONNOR CHAMPNEY\*** returned to Smoky Valley Ranch for his second internship. He is an undergraduate student at Fort Hays State University and says learning the scientific rationale for range management decisions was one of the most important things he’s learned. He says his favorite part was “seeing all the little things we did pay off—from providing water for the cattle to checking fences. It helped me realize that I was making a difference.”

**TUCKER ECKOLS** is back for another year, this time at Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve after an internship at Smoky Valley Ranch two years ago. The Emporia State University senior’s work this fall will include beginning a 100-acre prairie restoration and documenting plant forage for livestock and wildlife.

**MALACHI HARRIS** is a Chase County native studying ecology & biodiversity at Emporia State University, so Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve was a natural choice for his summer internship with The Nature Conservancy. His work included ecological monitoring, controlling invasive plants and harvesting seed for restoration.

**ALEX MURRAY** put his dual degrees in finance and environmental studies to work this summer as the David T. Beals III Healthy Streams for Kansas Fellow. The recent graduate of the University of Kansas developed a report to determine the economic value of conserving natural resources in the Blue River watershed. Alex says “working with and for The Nature Conservancy was an absolute dream come true.”

*\*Claire Burch and Connor Champney received the Lance Hedges Conservation Award, a scholarship named in memory of the former Kansas director of conservation for The Nature Conservancy who championed the next generation of conservationists.*



## FROM THE Land of Oz TO THE End of the World

Dramatic rolling grasslands dissected by pristine streams. Astounding biodiversity. Vital habitat for migrating birds. Ecosystems threatened by energy development and at risk of conversion. This may sound like Kansas—and it should—but it also describes many of the places where The Nature Conservancy works in Latin America. Over the past year, Kansas staff and trustees have joined colleagues in Argentina and Colombia to exchange ideas, share lessons hard-won and, as always, move conservation forward no matter the continent.

At Fortin Chacabuco, The Nature Conservancy’s only property in Argentina, sheep and cattle graze the northern Patagonia grasslands in a landscape reminiscent of the

Flint Hills in Kansas. A small group of Kansas trustees and staff visited in February just before international travel was restricted. They met with their Argentine counterparts for in-depth conversations about sustainable grazing, the protection of river headwaters, the impact of expanding renewable energy development and more.

In the Meta state of Colombia, The Nature Conservancy is working with the national park agency and private funders to establish a protected area and surrounding buffer zone across nearly 240,000 acres. Staff from Kansas and other central states have assisted their Colombian colleagues with key elements of the project, including due diligence and fundraising.

Patagonian grasslands in Argentina © Chris Pague/TNC



# Protected...Then What?

## Conservation Stewardship in the Flint Hills

Flint Hills © Jim Griggs

The last large expanse of tallgrass prairie can be found on a day trip for many Kansans. The Flint Hills extend from north of Manhattan, past Wichita and into northern Oklahoma, where they become known as the Osage Hills. The Flint Hills welcome thousands of visitors to celebrated nature preserves like Konza Prairie and Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, but nearly all of this sea of grass is privately-owned rangeland grazed by cattle.

For generations, it has been the cattle ranching community that has kept the Flint Hills a vibrant agricultural landscape and prevented it from being plowed under, developed or overrun with invasive plants and trees. The deep-rooted prairie grasses in the Flint Hills

nurture some of the greatest biological diversity in the world, but ranchers cannot protect it alone.

Some Flint Hills ranchers have exercised a bold vision to protect their piece of the tallgrass prairie, by granting conservation easements on their lands. Those easements allow livestock grazing to continue but preclude the types of development which threaten the region's ecology.

Thanks to landowners and the work of land trusts like The Nature Conservancy, Kansas Land Trust, Ranchland Trust of Kansas and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Flint Hills are scattered with conservation easements, creating a north-to-south network of more than

110,000 acres of protected land. Just this year, The Nature Conservancy added a 327-acre easement in the heart of the Flint Hills.

“Conservation easements are a great first step,” says Tony Capizzo, who directs The Nature Conservancy's Flint Hills Initiative. “With an easement, that land won't ever become a parking lot, but a living, breathing ecosystem needs more than just that one safeguard.”

If a piece of tallgrass prairie had a conservation easement and was then left completely alone for years, it wouldn't be tallgrass prairie anymore.

“Trees would become widespread, choking out the

prairie grasses,” explains Capizzo. “Wildlife like greater prairie-chickens would be displaced. Many native plants would be unable to thrive without the heat from fire and disturbance of grazing.”

That's where the concept of *conservation stewardship* comes in. It's more than just taking care of the land. Conservation stewardship is actively working to improve the health of the land, including the plants, water, soil and animals that depend on it. In short, sustainably managing the entire ecological community.

“Ranchers are the heart of lasting conservation in the Flint Hills,” says Shelly Wiggam, who was recently hired to lead The Nature Conservancy's

Conservation Stewardship Initiative. “Their living is made here. They are the stewards of this land, making decisions every day that impact their livelihoods and the landscape they respect and cherish.”

Just like The Nature Conservancy has done for years, ranchers are increasingly working across the fence to get conservation-based land management on the ground. “We're here to help them do that,” adds Wiggam.

The exact services provided by The Nature Conservancy will be customized to each property and could include developing grazing and drought plans and hands-on assistance controlling invasive species. Wiggam will also offer

the technical information and educational resources that land managers and partners ask for, like conservation science publications, grazing management demonstration sites and ranch tours.

“Layering this additional conservation on top of easements advances our goal of maintaining the last expanse of tallgrass prairie in a truly meaningful way,” says Capizzo. “And we hope that by providing landowners support, more will consider the long-term protection of their land through conservation easements.”



**SIGN UP** If you manage land in the Flint Hills and would like more information about conservation stewardship, contact Shelly Wiggam at [shelly.wiggam@tnc.org](mailto:shelly.wiggam@tnc.org) or 785-477-6592.



# Governor Kelly Re-affirms Tallgrass Wind Moratorium

In August, Governor Laura Kelly issued a proclamation to continue the moratorium on the development of wind power infrastructure in the previously established Tallgrass Heartland region of the Flint Hills. This moratorium dates back to 2004 and has consistently received enthusiastic bipartisan support, demonstrating that Kansans can come together to protect our valuable shared natural resources. The Nature Conservancy applauds Governor Kelly's decision.

The Nature Conservancy actively supports the rapid deployment of low-impact renewable energy in Kansas and throughout the Great Plains. Kansas is a great place to do that. However, wind energy takes a lot of land, and, if the projects are improperly sited, they threaten some of our most special places and the unique wildlife of the region. The Flint Hills nurture some of the greatest biological diversity in the world, and they deserve continued protection.

Fortunately, robust wind energy and abundant wildlife do not need to be at odds. Science shows we can meet and exceed ambitious renewable energy goals without developing the Flint Hills.

►► [NATURE.ORG/SITEWINDRIGHT](https://www.nature.org/site/windright)



© Jim Richardson



**TALLGRASS PRAIRIE QUARTER** On November 16, the United States Mint will issue a coin commemorating the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve in Kansas under the America the Beautiful Quarters Program. The program selected one national park or other site in each state for its natural or historic significance. Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve—the country's only national park unit dedicated to tallgrass prairie—covers both criteria with its diverse ecosystem and rich ranching legacy. Staff from The Nature Conservancy and the National Park Service worked with the U.S. Mint on a design that symbolizes the largest expanse of tallgrass prairie left in the world. The quarter depicts a skyward view of a regal fritillary butterfly against a backdrop of iconic big bluestem and Indian grasses.

## VETERANS NEXT MISSION:

A veteran-led nonprofit, Servicemember Agricultural Vocation Education (SAVE), has secured its future and is now the proud owner of a 308-acre farm northwest of Manhattan, Kansas.

SAVE Farm was established in 2015 as a pathway to farming for veterans and servicemembers by providing agricultural training and medical assistance to men and women transitioning from the military to civilian life. The program offers students an opportunity to learn firsthand about managing cropland, livestock animals, orchards, horticulture and bees. SAVE's program is specially designed to remove barriers for those with disabilities to work with farm equipment and animals.

SAVE had been leasing their farm for many years, and when the opportunity to purchase the property presented itself, two national, environment-focused nonprofit organizations—The Nature Conservancy and The Conservation Fund—stepped up to provide low-cost loans for the acquisition.

At SAVE, on-the-soil experience is combined with classroom

## Sustainable Agriculture

time covering a range of topics like agricultural science, law, marketing, agri-biotechnology, wildlife management, molecular biology, welding, commercial driving and woodworking. Kansas State University's agricultural program is providing the farm with their curriculum for educational programs.

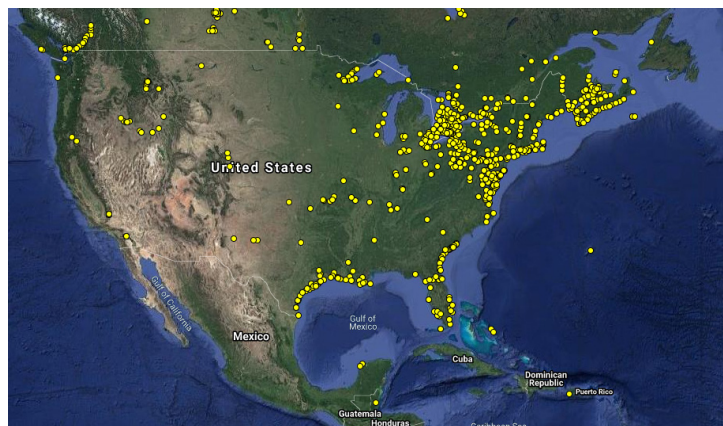
To date, SAVE has trained more than 500 veterans and over 90% of them have gone on to either farm themselves or find jobs elsewhere in the agriculture business sector; but the effort is in the beginning stages.

“It's SAVE's hope, and our hope, that this model will be replicated at all land grant universities,” says Heidi Mehl, director of water and agriculture programs for The Nature Conservancy. “Eventually, thousands of SAVE farmers will be using best conservation practices right from the beginning of their careers. Things like no-till, cover crops, diversification, grazing for wildlife, managing for pollinators—they aren't an afterthought, but rather deeply integrated into how SAVE teaches farming.”



Photos © SAVE Farm





Top: White-rumped sandpiper with radio tag © Nick Docken  
 Bottom: Motus receiver locations in the United States © Motus Wildlife Tracking System

### RADIO TRACKING BIRDS AT CHEYENNE BOTTOMS

Two radio receivers have been installed at Cheyenne Bottoms to track the movements of small flying animals, such as birds, bats and large insects, that have been fitted with transmitters. The tracking towers are part of the Motus Wildlife Tracking System, an international research network that studies the movement of small animals (*motus* is Latin for movement or motion) and has one of the world's largest wildlife tracking datasets. The vast majority of receivers in the United States are in the east, with very little data from the central states. These new stations at Cheyenne Bottoms—one on The Nature Conservancy preserve in the northwest corner of the wetland basin and another at the Kansas Wetlands Education Center to the southeast—create an electronic fence of sorts, to detect all tagged animals that pass through the area. Data will help show how fast animals move between locations, how long they stay and what migration paths are followed.



### FARMING INNOVATIONS FOR RATTLESNAKE CREEK

The Nature Conservancy has begun an on-farm trial project in the area around Rattlesnake Creek in Edwards and Stafford counties to test new irrigation technology. This project will utilize mobile drip irrigation, which applies water directly to the soil surface, and an irrigation scheduling tool developed by Kansas State University. The goal is to reduce the amount of groundwater pumped and used for crop fields while still maintaining harvest size and profitability. Low annual rainfall in the creek basin means successful crop production is dependent on supplemental water drawn from the Great Bend Prairie aquifer. This aquifer is also crucial to the health of the nearby Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, which is critical habitat for the endangered whooping crane. For years, the local groundwater management district, GMD5, has encouraged water conservation but there is an urgent need for new solutions that allow farmers to use water more efficiently.



Mobile drip lines © K-State Research and Extension

**SIGN UP** If you would like to enroll as a Water Technology Farm in this project, please contact Heidi Mehl, director of water & agriculture programs at [heidi.mehl@tnc.org](mailto:heidi.mehl@tnc.org) or 785-233-4400.



This work is supported by the Conservation Innovation Grants program at USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Other key partners include WaterPACK, Kansas State University and GMD5.

## LITTLE JERUSALEM BADLANDS STATE PARK

# One Year Later...

The results are in, and Little Jerusalem is a hit. Since opening in October 2019, more than 30,000 people have visited Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park in Logan county. The 332-acres of dramatic chalk rock formations are owned by The Nature Conservancy, which partnered with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism to make portions of the area open to the public. Little Jerusalem is open sunup to sundown daily, all year round, including holidays, with two, permanent hiking trails that take you to multiple scenic overlooks at your own pace. State Park staff also offer guided tours and special events, including occasional night-time tours, by reservation only.

► [NATURE.ORG/LITTLEJERUSALEM](https://www.nature.org/littlejerusalem)



© Mickey Shannon

Visitors on opening day and Naturalist Sarah Kay Carrell © Rick McNary, Trail sign © Bruce Hogle



# Every gift plays a crucial role.

The Nature Conservancy's accomplishments are only made possible by the many individuals, organizations, businesses and foundations that make financial contributions to our conservation programs. In addition to acres and stream miles protected, natural areas restored and wildlife habitat safeguarded, your donation supports many other elements of conservation work, such as science, research, policy and educational internships.

We are honored to recognize the following donors who made contributions of \$100 or more from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020. Everyone listed here has ties to Kansas. Some live here, others live elsewhere and prefer their gifts be used for projects in Kansas. In some cases, these contributions supported conservation in other parts of the world. We deeply appreciate every gift and regret that space constraints prevent us from listing all donors.

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# Great American Outdoors Act: A Win for Nature

“ In recent months, we’ve seen the important role outdoor spaces play in our daily lives—highlighting the need to conserve, maintain and improve access to these places for everyone. The passage of the Great American Outdoors Act by Congress this month shows our representatives have received that message. In a great bipartisan win in both the Senate and the House, this bill will fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund, or LWCF, and invest \$1.9 billion annually for the next five years to address a massive backlog of unmet maintenance needs at national parks and other public lands.

Fully funding the LWCF means that the annual \$900 million it is authorized to receive from offshore oil and gas revenues—not tax dollars—will go to the fund. In the past, although the money was there, Congress had typically given the LWCF less than half that amount.

We want to thank Missouri Senator Roy Blunt and Kansas Senator Pat Roberts, along with Missouri Representatives Billy Long, Lacy Clay and Emanuel Cleaver II and Kansas Representatives Roger Marshall and Sharice Davids, for actively supporting and cosponsoring this bill.

Passage of the Great American Outdoors Act ensures that people in all states are able to enjoy a multitude of benefits found in natural areas, outdoor spaces and our national parks— signaling a lasting commitment to people and nature.

**Betsey Solberg** & **Beth Alm**  
 Kansas Trustee, & Missouri Trustee,  
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This letter to the editor ran in the Kansas City Star on July 26, 2020. The president signed the Great American Outdoors Act into law on August 4, 2020.

## NATURE LAB Educator Resources

**OUTDOOR CLASSROOM, ONLINE** Getting outside is core to a child’s understanding of the world around them. Unfortunately, many people now spend the overwhelming majority of their lives indoors and schools are often unable to take field trips to nature preserves. This spring, The Nature Conservancy launched Nature Lab, an engaging online platform

to help young people confront the urgent and complex challenges facing the planet. Nature Lab helps children learn about conserving nature for its own sake and for its ability to fulfill their needs and enrich their lives. Modules are aligned with education standards and focus on conservation issues such as how climate change impacts our lives and the role of healthy fire in grasslands and forests. High-quality videos transport students to diverse landscapes such as Borneo, Canada and China while interviews with renowned scientists offer youth a chance to see themselves as agents of change while exploring acoustic technology, the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and the need for green energy. Easy-to-use learning guides encourage students to make a difference in their own communities.

▶▶ [NATURE.ORG/NATURELAB](https://www.nature.org/naturelab)

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Indian Grass © Jim Griggs



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